

Research Leadership Awards 2025 Frequently Asked Questions

General

How many Research Leadership Awards are available per round?

The Trust expects to fund in the region of ten Research Leadership Awards in this round, depending upon the quality and suitability of applications.

Can the Research Leadership Awards be used to support smaller projects under the £1,000,000 maximum budget available?

The Research Leadership Awards are major grants with a duration of four to five years which aim to enable scholars to build a research team to address a particular issue, and in doing so develop their leadership skills. Given this, while there are differences between disciplines in terms of the resources required to conduct research, we expect projects to be larger scale. To date, all awards have been over £800,000.

Eligibility

Is there a limit on the number of years post-PhD an applicant can be?

We do not specify a maximum number of years postdoctoral experience an applicant to the Research Leadership Awards scheme can have. However, the scheme is aimed at those who have launched an academic career but are not yet fully established and are at the stage when they are ready to build a team to address a particular research problem. Applicants should not have already held major grants or led a research team.

Does a postdoctoral position count as a research post in terms of the two years' post-PhD experience required?

Time spent in postdoctoral posts can be included in the two years' post-PhD experience required.

Can applicants have had a break between the research and/or teaching posts counting towards the two years' post-PhD experience required?

Yes, this is fine, as long as the applicant has had two years' full-time experience in a research and/or teaching post following the award of their PhD.

Is it possible for someone to apply for the Research Leadership Award with a project that they have also submitted to a different scheme or funder?

Yes, this is possible. Applicants should declare all research grant proposals concurrently running.

Can I send the Trust my proposal to check its suitability for the scheme?

The Trust does not review applications for their suitability to a scheme, but if you have any concerns

regarding your personal eligibility or the remit of your proposed project for the Research Leadership Award, please get in touch.

I have not managed any postdoctoral research assistants, but I have supervised students. Am I still eligible to apply?

Yes, you are still eligible to apply if you have supervised any number of students at any level. You would be ineligible if you have managed any number of research staff.

I have not been the principal investigator on a research grant that exceeds £100k. However, I have been a co-investigator on a grant that exceeds £100k. Am I eligible to apply?

We will need to consider this on a case-by-case basis. Please send an email to grants@leverhulme.ac.uk and provide your name and details of the research grants over £100k where you have been co-investigator. For each grant, please include the funder, name of the scheme, title of the project, total amount funded, %FTE on the grant and your role/responsibilities on the grant (including whether you managed a budget or research staff).

Research Team

Is there any guidance on the structure of the proposed research team?

There are no expectations or preferences regarding how the proposed team is structured as this will differ between institutions, disciplines and reflect the Research Leader's experience. The structure of the team should be described and justified in the application.

Can co-applicants be included in the research team?

Research Leadership Awards are not collaborative projects, and co-applicants cannot therefore be included in the research team. 'Team' in this instance refers to the Research Leader and staff such as Postdoctoral Researchers and PhD students. Input to the project can be provided via a steering or advisory group and/or research visits. However, please note that the Trust does not cover the costs of steering/advisory groups.

Are project partners/other collaborating organisations allowed to participate such as other universities, industry, charities and NGOs?

Research Leadership Awards are not collaborative grants. Input from other academics or individuals from outside academia can be obtained via research visits and/or advisory groups, although please note that the Trust does not pay for the costs of advisory groups.

Is there a minimum/maximum FTE for Research Assistants?

At least one of the Research Assistants on the project should be working at least 50% in each grant year. Beyond this there is no other stipulation in terms of RA time, although staff time needs to be justified in terms of the requirements of the role.

Is it possible to include overseas sub-contracted researchers in a Research Leadership Award project?

Yes, overseas sub-contracted researchers can be included. A justification for their inclusion will need to be provided in the detailed statement of research.

If the research team includes PhD students, do these have to be completed within the duration of the award?

Yes, PhD studentships need to be completed within the proposed duration of the award.

Are there any requirements or limitations on the level of experience or salary grade for Research Assistants employed on a Research Leadership Award including those at pre-doctoral level?

The Trust has no stipulations on the grades of researchers employed on Research Leadership Awards. The applicant will need to justify why the grade they have chosen is appropriate for the

proposed work to be conducted and the level of experience and skills required. **Please also note that individuals registered for a PhD are not eligible to work as research assistants on Trust-funded projects.**

Can summer undergraduate project students be included as part of a Research Leadership Award?

Summer project students can be included in the project and a small stipend for these can be claimed under the 'Associated Costs' budget heading. The applicant will need to clarify whether the projects would be part of the students' formal assessment or if they would be conducted purely for interest and development.

Budget

Can consultancy costs be included in the budget?

Consultancy needs to be extremely well-justified and should only be for a limited number of hours. If consultancy costs are being claimed for those giving **specialised** input to the project, the applicant needs to explain why this can't be provided via research visits or as a role on a steering committee. Please note that consultancy costs should be given under the 'staff costs' budget heading.

Can the costs of advertising for staff recruitment be included in the budget?

Yes, the costs of advertising for new posts can be included in the budget, however, no other costs related to recruitment can be claimed.

Can the costs of external organisations be included in the budget, and can these organisations claim overhead costs?

External organisations can be included as sub-contractors under the 'associated costs' budget heading, but a strong justification needs to be provided for their involvement in the project. The Trust does not pay any form of overhead costs.

Are items of equipment eligible under the scheme?

Essential items of equipment costing up to £2,500 each may be included, but explicit justification is required for each item.

Can fieldwork and training costs for PhD students be included in the budget?

The costs of fieldwork and training for PhD students on a Research Leadership Award can be claimed and should be included under the 25% 'Associated Costs' heading. These should be based on the proposed actual costs and justified in the application.

Is it possible for the Researcher Leadership Award holder to allocate costs for their own training and development?

Yes, these costs can be included in the budget under associated costs.

Is it possible to include the costs of using facilities at another institution and the consumables associated with this?

If the research requires facilities unavailable at the university hosting the award, it is possible to include the costs of accessing these and any necessary consumables.

Does the Trust cover visa costs?

Yes, the Trust will cover reasonable visa costs. Please see our general FAQ page for more information: [Salary costs | The Leverhulme Trust](#).

The Application

Is it possible to have access to an editable copy of the application form?

It is not possible for the Trust to send out copies of the application form; a pdf version can be created by the applicant once the application is set up on the Trust's grants management system. The scheme guidance and help notes provide details of the information required in the application.

Is it possible for those supporting the development of a Research Leadership Award application to have access to the proposal on the grants management system?

It is not possible for other individuals to be given access to the application on the system, however, applicants can generate a pdf of the proposal to enable this to be reviewed by others. Details of the information required by the application is given in the scheme guidance and help notes.

Can applicants submit a narrative CV rather than a traditional CV?

Applicants may submit their CV in whichever format they feel is most appropriate, as long as this provides the necessary information on academic qualifications, career history, research interests, publications, teaching and supervision, other professional activities and awards, grants, and prizes.

Are references included in the ten-page limit for the statement of research?

Yes, any references need to be within the ten-page maximum stipulated for the statement of research. We do not stipulate font, font size or margins, but the document must be readable. Diagrams, charts and/or pictures may be included but must be within the ten-page limit.

Who should provide the statement of support for the application?

The statement of support should be provided by a designated representative of the university, which is usually the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research or an individual in a similar role.

Does the 500-word supporting statement from the designated representative need to be on letter headed paper?

You can provide a signed statement on headed paper if you wish to do so, but this is not a requirement as the statement is submitted directly by the representative.

The Application Process

Once a university has notified the Trust of their selected candidate for the Research Leadership Awards, and they have been added to the call, will they receive automatic notification of this?

Applicants do not receive automatic notification from the grants management system inviting them to start their proposal. Instead, applicants will need to log onto the system and select the call from the list of schemes which will give them access to the application form. The Trust will notify the university once their selected applicant has been added to the call on the grants management system.

Do referees and the designated representative providing the 500-word statement need to register for a user account on the grants management system?

Neither the referees nor representatives need to register for an account on the grants management system. If the representative already has an account, their details will be pulled in when they are chosen by the applicant. If the representative does not have an account, this will be created for them when they are added to the proposal by the applicant.

How is the designated representative statement provided and when in the process does this take place?

The applicant should add the designated representative to their online application form. They can

then notify the representative that this has taken place, and an email will be sent to them with details of how to view the application. Once the applicant has completed their proposal and submitted this, the designated representative will receive a further email asking them to upload their statement of support which should be provided as a pdf document. When they have done this, they should confirm their approval which sends the proposal onwards for institutional sign-off. Please note that all approvals need to be in place by the deadline. The applicant can also send the designated representative notification.

Referees

Does the Trust prefer referees to be internal or external from the applicant's institution, and do referees need to be provided from within academia?

References should be provided from those outside of your current university, and the two referees should be from different organisations. Referees are asked to comment upon the applicant's work as well as their suitability for the proposed project so it would be unusual for a referee to come from outside academia. Please see the following webpage for general guidance on selecting a referee: <https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/advice-choosing-referee>

What is the format for references, what are referees asked to comment upon, and how much are they expected to write?

Reviewers complete an assessment form which is free text. They are asked to comment upon both the candidate and their suitability for a Research Leadership Award, and the proposed research which would be undertaken should an award be made. There are no requirements in terms of the amount of text which should be provided, but this should be sufficient to cover the points requested in a fair degree of detail to inform the assessment of the application and candidate.

When are references requested from referees?

References are requested after the deadline, once the application has been submitted and validated by the Trust. Please note that there is a deadline for the submission of references.